

LECONTE'S SPARROW AT HOME NEAR CHICAGO.

BY GERARD ALAN ABBOTT.

Leconte's Sparrow has been regularly observed and recorded from the Calumet region, around Chicago in April. From then until September most of the migratory sparrows are north of Illinois and Leconte's has been classed only as a transient in this vicinity. Personally I neglect small birds in my zeal to follow and study the water fowl. Students generally manifest a preference for the large birds, but as their experience afield becomes more scientific, insectivorous and seed-eating birds receive attention.

On May 21, 1910, the afternoon was cool and rainy. I was searching for Bartramian Sandpipers along the grassy fields bordering a tributary of the Calumet River. The locality was a favorite haunt for Henslow's Sparrow, spring and summer. I heard several indistinct chirps as I moved slowly up the incline, carefully examining each clump of grass. One little bird was particularly demonstrative, and such a ventriloquist I did not catch a glimpse of him.

When two hundred yards above the marsh, I stooped intuitively and parted the vegetation, exposing in a little clump of coarse grass, a neat little nest supported on a mass of last year's herbage two inches high. The structure was deep and composed entirely of fine, dry grass, very substantial for a "Ground Bird's Nest."

When I returned to this meadow four days later, the nest was more difficult to locate than before, as I had misjudged the distance of my land marks. Upland Plover and Meadow Lark both reluctantly exposed their eggs, while I explored tussock after tussock trying to locate the little Sparrow's nest. Finally the sign loomed up before me and I was delighted to peer once more into the coveted clump and observe that the nest now contained two freshly laid eggs of Leconte's Sparrow.

May 28, 1910, I collected the set. The bird flew from the

nest when I was within ten feet of her. The flight was short and feeble as she darted slowly over the weed stalks, soon dropping into cover. The male though making himself heard, was not conspicuous in any other way.

The eggs show a distinct individuality. Unlike the products of either the Grasshopper or Henslow's Sparrows, the background is ashy gray, thickly and rather heavily blotched with shades of brick red and light brown. In shape they resemble the typical Bobolink's egg. In size they are smaller than any of our other meadow birds except the Short-billed Marsh Wren.

June 12, 1910, my friend, Mr. Ford, had the good fortune to find another set of four within seventy-five yards of this spot. The nest and eggs closely resembled the former set. The eggs are slightly lighter in coloration and the nest less elaborate. This, I am quite sure, was a second set from the same bird. Mr. Ford, like myself, realized the value of such a find and spent some little time in watching the parent and noting her actions.

June 26, 1910, Charles Richards located a nest and three eggs of Henslow's Bunting in the same area. This bird is not an uncommon summer resident here and I presume at least half a dozen pair nest along the river bottom in this neighborhood every June.

Unlike Leconte's, this nest was placed on the ground and lacked the substantial appearance shown in the general construction of the two nests of Leconte's sparrow. The eggs of the Henslow's Sparrow had a beautiful light green background which partially disappeared when the contents of the eggs were removed. The spots are almost entirely clustered about the larger half of the egg and tend to form a distinct wreath. The markings are in the form of bright reddish specks and dots. In shape the eggs are quite pyriform.